THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONEMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (d) The Government of India has decided to sign the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). The Convention seeks the elimination and/or restriction of production and use of 12 highly hazardous substances. As on 5th April, 2002, 126 countries have signed the Stockholm Convention. Phase out of Chlorofluorocarbons and Carbontetrachloride are not covered under the Stockholm Convention.

Rate of deforestation

4702. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have assessed the rate of deforestation;

(b) whether it is a fact that deforestation is taking place at alarming rate; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to prevent it?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The various steps taken by the Government to check deforestation are:

(i) Afforestation pogrammes are undertaken by State Governments/U.T. Administrations from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines have been issued to all States/U.T.s to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes, (v) \ network of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared a National Forestry Action Programme to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through increased investments in conservation and development of forest resources.

Environmental clearance to irrigation projects of UP

4703. SHRI HARENDRA SINGH MALIK: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of irrigation projects of Uttar Pradesh, pending for clearance with Government at present, district-wise;

(b) the reasons for the delay; and

(c) by when all the irrigation projects likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER. OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (C) No irrigation project of Uttar Pradesh is pending for environmental clearance. Only one irrigation project involving 19.171 ha. of forest land for Basti Branch Canal Alignment Km 42.0 to 72.0 under Saryu canal project of Balrampur district of Uttar Pradesh is pending for forestry clearance for want of certain essential information from the State Government.

Progress in Ganga Action Plan

4704. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the progress made so far in implementation of Ganga Action Plan and the scheme-wise and phase-wise expenditure thereon;

(b) how far the implementation is still behind the schedule; and

(c) the steps being taken to complete the Plan?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c) The Ganga Action Plan has been taken up in two phases. The Ganga Action Plan Phase I was launched in